

Bread Riots:

- Bread was far more than the staff of life for most peasants in the pre-industrial era; it was life itself. The bulk of a peasant's diet came from the consumption of bread, with an adult male eating as much as two or three pounds in a day.
- Throughout most of the pre-industrial era, French peasants existed at the subsistence level. Most peasants grew just enough grain to pay their taxes (which they usually paid in grain and other agricultural goods), with some grain left over. Peasants used the leftover grain to feed themselves at a minimal level, with a small amount of grain being saved to plant the next year.
- Too much rain or too little, hailstorms or excessive sun, warfare in the region, disease – all could damage their crops and reduce peasants to poverty and starvation. A few bad years in a row could cause widespread famine and death.
- Grain and bread riots were extremely common in this period. Though often limited in size and scope, these riots sometimes spilled out across an entire region, sparking uprisings in different towns and villages.
- These grain riots often had a gendered aspect. Women, as the “weaker” sex, were seen as less politically dangerous than men. Not surprisingly, local authorities responded more slowly to a riot led or dominated by women than to a riot led by men. When women rioted at the marketplace, their anger was seen as dangerous but understandable; they were, after all, simply trying to provide for their families.
- As these riots became more common, grain riots could have powerful repercussions. During the winter and spring of 1789, bread riots were especially common. In fact, the riots that resulted in the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 and helped move forward the early stages of the French Revolution began as a search for arms and grains. Peasants had suspected that nobles had hoarded grain in anticipation of higher prices and they had taken to the streets to protest this hoarding.
- In the early stages of the French Revolution, rising bread prices were a major concern; the new government, worried about what the people might do if they could not get access to bread, quickly responded to complaints about prices, accusations of hoarding, and other, similar concerns.
- These riots and, even more simply, the threat of rioting helped propel the revolution forward and make it increasingly radical.
- **The Women's March on Versailles**, also known as **The March on Versailles**, was one of the earliest and most significant events of the French Revolution. The march began among women in the marketplaces of Paris who, on the morning of 5 October 1789, were near rioting over the high price and scarcity of bread.
 - Their demonstrations quickly became intertwined with the activities of revolutionaries, who were seeking liberal political reforms. The market women and their various allies grew into a mob of thousands
 - They ransacked the city armory for weapons and marched to the Palace of Versailles. The crowd surrounded the palace, and in a dramatic and violent confrontation, they successfully pressed their demands upon King Louis XVI.
 - The next day, the crowd compelled the king, his family, and most of the French Assembly to return with them to Paris. That was the last time the royal family was in Versailles.
- These events ended the king's independence and signified the change of power and reforms about to overtake France. The march symbolized a new balance of power that displaced the ancient privileged orders of the French nobility and favored the nation's common people.